

Drought Water Bank
Long Range Weather Forecasts
Pre-Season Flood Meetings
Other Events

With an eye toward preparing for the potential of another dry year, the Department of Water Resources is initiating the 2009 Drought Water Bank.

This program is one of a set of tools being implemented to offset challenges and impacts to water users next year. The 2009 Drought Water Bank will purchase water from willing sellers upstream of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, and provide water to agencies experiencing or expecting water shortages, usually south of the Delta.

Vital information about the Drought Water Bank will be presented as an interactive webinar, as well as archived on the new Drought Website:

www.water.ca.gov/drought

Information for Sellers will be presented at 9am on Wednesday, September 17.

Information for Buyers will be presented at 11am on Wednesday, September 17.

Viewers can send in questions that will be answered live by the panelists, or returned via email and archived in a Frequently Asked Questions section on the Drought page.

So, how do things stand, and what's the future hold? Well, its early in the season, of course, but we do have some limited guidance for the season ahead. First, some current status bits:

Northern California has experienced its driest spring and summer (March thru August) period on record. The 8-Station Northern Sierra Precipitation Index shows only 3.4" of rain during this time, 24% of normal, and the driest spring/summer in 88 years of record.

Statewide average precipitation over the last 2 years has averaged about 70% of normal.

Runoff for this water year will be near 57% of normal. That follows last year, when statewide runoff amounted to only 53% of normal. In terms of water supply, these runoff figures provide a much more telling tale than precipitation.

Reservoir storage is quite low following 2 years of dry conditions statewide. Oroville and Shasta are lower now than their levels following the first 2 years of our most recent dry period, the '87 to '92 drought. As of today, Oroville is at 31%, Shasta at 32% of capacity. At this point in the year, reservoirs are usually around 60% of capacity. Percent of capacity statewide averages at 45%. The percent of average for this time of year is holding near the 73% of average range that it had on September 1 (usually averaged up to 75% in documents). It will likely stay at about that level, not drop to the

70% level that was estimated a few months ago. However, if we continue the dry trend, those numbers are troubling.

Water Year 2009 begins on October 1st. October is not a hugely productive month, usually, but it does normally bring about 3" of precip to the Northern Sierra. A full season normal is 50.0". November normal is 6.3", with December bringing in 8.4", on average. (Note: January is normally the wettest month across the Northern Sierra, bringing 9" of precip, on average.)

There is no strong ocean signal to forecast from this year. Last year was a La Nina year, with cooler-than-normal waters over the tropical Eastern Pacific. The La Nina dwindled, and no big movement toward an El Nino is taking place. This is colloquially referred to as "La Nada", or neutral conditions. Without a forcing from that ocean signal, its harder to pose a long range winter trend.

There are several models and agencies that are attempting a look ahead. NOAA's Climate Prediction Center is indicating that both the October thru December and January through March periods will be "normal" along the west coast for precipitation:

<http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/forecasts/>

Yes, there is still the possibility of our having a normal winter in terms of rainfall. That would help things not worsen hydrologically. But we are too far to say with any certainty that that will be the case.

Additionally, following two dry years, soil moisture is very low. We may experience lower runoff due to ground conditions than the amount of incoming precip might suggest. And one wetter than normal year may not be sufficient to make up for the deficit in water supply. To see full improvement in our reservoirs would probably take a whopper 95th percentile year. That would be a water year wetter than 95% of years - in other words, one that has only a 5% chance of happening.

Other groups, including Creighton University, the International Research Institute for Climate and Society, the APEC Climate Center out of South Korea, and the Global Climate Center in North Bend, WA lean toward drier than normal conditions for California for the start of the winter.

Although I can't provide detail on the parameterizations of those models, I can give you the upshot. None of them seem to be saying it will be a wet start to the year. So that whopper year doesn't seem to be in the making.

Pre-Season Flood Meetings are underway. For agencies and groups involved in flood issues, these annual meetings provide program information, new contact data, and preparedness updates. Floods are a concern every year, even during a drought.

Dates of the 2008 meetings are as follows:

Ventura; September 16

Riverside; September 17

San Diego; September 18

Red Bluff; October 8

Yuba City; October 9
Sacramento; October 15
Stockton; October 16
Napa; October 23
Eureka; 1st week of December, 2008

For more information on these meetings, please contact the Flood Operations Center at (916)574-2619, or 574-0358.

The California Energy Commission just wrapped up its 5th Annual California Climate Change Conference. There were any number of great presentations. The powerpoints are available on line at their website:

http://www.climatechange.ca.gov/events/2008_conference/index.html

The Department of Water Resources, Western States Water Council, and Western Governors' Association are sponsoring a workshop on climate change adaptation policy, to be held on September 24-26 in Irvine. A working draft agenda is attached. The purpose of the workshop is to begin a dialog among Western water managers at the federal, state, and local levels about tools for water sector adaptation, such as development of new hydrologic "design standards". Registration information can be found at:

<http://www.westgov.org/wswc/climate%20chg.html>

Quick weather note: trough over west coast today, with a slightly deeper low bumping into California this weekend. Expect variable cloudiness, higher humidity, scattered sprinkles in lower elevations, and the threat of lightning strikes and thunderstorms in the Sierra and coastal range.

Look for the next issuance of this newsletter in mid-October. Do your rain dance!

(EL)

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